



## Summary report of STARS application and participation December 2007

Vermont's STep Ahead Recognition System (STARS) is making steady progress towards its goals: that of engaging the maximum number of regulated child care, early education and afterschool programs in achieving standards that are associated with better outcomes for children, families and practitioners.

- STARS is an agent for improving quality by engaging programs in investing in their program's growth. The number of participants has grown steadily since it began in 2004, with no indication that this will slow down.

### Number of participants as of November 30, 2007

- ∞ 288 programs have submitted applications to STARS
- ∞ 234 programs hold certificates in STARS (have completed application process)
- ∞ 19 programs with submitted applications are in process of completing the application
- ∞ 88 programs have been in STARS for 1 year, 95 programs have been in STARS for 2 years and are in the process of or have completed an annual renewal, 51 programs have been in STARS for more than 2 years, renewing 2 or 3 times
- ∞ 16 participating programs closed, 5 programs discontinued participation at renewal
- ∞ 17 programs submitted applications and subsequently closed or chose not to continue
- ∞ 87 of 234 programs qualify for the streamlined process (NAEYC, NAFCC, NAA or NECPA accredited or Head Start program of quality or excellence), 4 of these earned 5 stars by meeting the high standards of the new NAEYC accreditation process or were Head Start programs achieving Blue or Gold Certificates
- ∞ Over 6000 children are enrolled in child care, early education and afterschool programs that are participating in STARS

The rate of incoming applications has held steady with about 8 applications each month for the last 2½ years. The number of participating programs represents approximately 13% of the licensed and registered programs in the state. While all types of programs participate in STARS, there are proportionally more licensed programs participating than registered programs. This is typical of registered and licensed program participation in local and state initiatives.

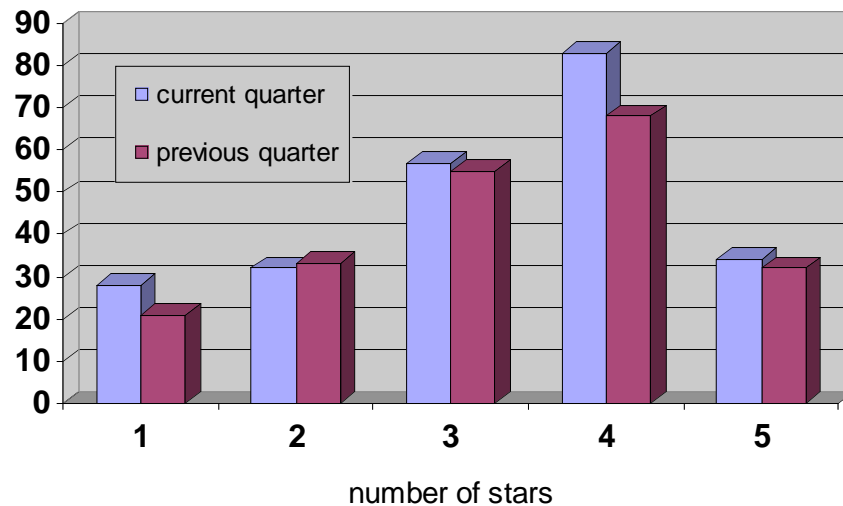
- To meet the goal that STARS is an agent for improving quality, participants will represent the full range of achievements. This shows that STARS is attractive to all levels, not just those have already demonstrated quality through other standards.

**Table 1. Number of stars achieved**

	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	total
programs at level	28	32	57	83	34	234
percent of total	12%	14%	24%	35%	15%	

The following (Figure 1) is a graphic representation of Table 1 with the addition of the number of programs participating in the previous quarter (April to July) for comparison.

**Figure 1. Distribution of stars among all programs, compared to previous quarter**



The pattern of participants shows that 26% of the participants are at the 1- or 2-star level. STARS is attracting programs at the more basic levels, with the potential to engage them in investing in their program's growth.

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- STARS participants represent all types of regulated programs in the state, including afterschool programs and public school preschool programs. STARS is showing it can promote program growth and achievement in all settings.

**Table 2. Number of stars by type of program**

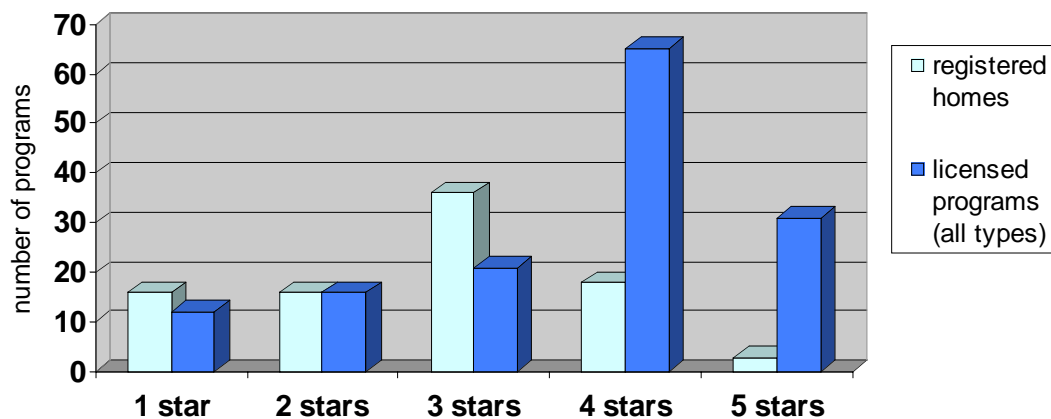
	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	total
afterschool program	7	1	2	2	3	15
Head Start				6	6	12
licensed home		2	5	2		9
licensed center	4	13	12	49	17	95
public school preschool	1		2	6	5	14
registered home	16	16	36	18	3	89
grand total	28	32	57	83	34	234

**Table 3. Number of stars by type of program,  
registered homes compared to licensed centers**

	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	total	percent of all in state
registered homes	16	16	36	18	3	89	8%
licensed programs (all types)	12	16	21	65	31	145	21%
total	28	32	57	83	34	234	13%

Figure 2 is a graphic representation of the data in Table 3.

**Figure 2. Number of stars by registered and licensed programs**



(The large number of licensed programs at the 4 and 5 star levels reflects the participation of accredited and qualifying Head Start programs)

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- STARS continues to attract participants from across the state. It is the case that the number of participants per district is not uniformly proportional to the number of programs per district. A year ago, the regional participation rate varied greatly across regions, but as more programs participate, the regional differences are decreasing. However, there are still areas where the participation rate is lower than would be expected, given the size of the region. In Table 4, the last column on the right shows the percentage of total STARS participants by region. Comparing these percentages to relative magnitude of each AHS district, very general conclusions may be drawn about which areas have higher than expected participation and which areas have lower than expected participation. The table also shows how the current quarter compares to the regional participation rates of the previous quarter.

**Table 4. Number of programs participating in each AHS district**

	1 star	2 stars	3 stars	4 stars	5 stars	total	previous total	percent of total
Franklin/Grand Isle	6	4	7	8	2	27	27	* 12%
Chittenden/Burlington	3	3	6	12	17	41	34	** 18%
Hartford/ White Rvr Jct		4	5	9	1	19	16	8%
Caledonia/St.Johnsbury	7	1	4	3	5	20	20	8%
Windham/Brattleboro		1	2	6	1	10	8	4%
Washington/Montpelier	2		8	4	3	17	15	** 7%
Orleans/Newport	3	2	6	5		16	13	* 7%
Rutland	1	4	6	8		19	17	** 8%
Windsor/Springfield	1		2	6	1	10	10	5%
Bennington		7	5	14	2	28	26	* 12%
Lamoille/Morrisville	4	5	2	5		16	14	7%
Addison/Middlebury	1	1	4	3	2	11	9	5%
total	28	32	57	83	34	234	209	

\* Indicates a region where the participation rate is somewhat higher than is expected for the relative size of that region

\*\* Indicates a region where the participation rate is somewhat lower than expected

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- ☐ To meet the goal that STARS is a tool programs use to implement quality improvements, STARS must demonstrate that programs increase their point levels over time.

### **Point and star level characteristics of programs that have renewed**

Programs renew and update their participation in STARS annually. Examining the point profiles for the renewing programs provides information about achievements that are indicators of quality. The results indicate that STARS is promoting program growth.

Application updates have been completed on 148 continuing programs (16 programs closed and 5 did not renew). As of December 2007, 52 programs have been in STARS longer than 2 years (participated in a 2<sup>nd</sup> renewal or more).

For the summaries reported here, current point and star levels are compared to the programs' original point and star levels. That is, those programs renewing more than once are compared to their starting placement rather than their previous year's levels.

**Table 5. Change in star level with renewal**

	<b>increased</b>	<b>stayed same</b>	<b>decreased</b>	<b>total</b>
number of programs	48	98	2	148

Of the 148, 2 decreased their point levels enough that they achieved a lower star level than when they started. These are programs that lost points in their first renewal. There are 2 other programs that decreased star levels initially and with subsequent renewal have regained or exceeded their original levels.

Ninety eight programs stayed at the same star level (66%). Of these, 51 are 4 or 5 star programs (programs that began STARS with a high level of points). The star levels of the programs that maintained the same level of stars is shown in Table 8.

**Table 6. Programs staying at the same star level at renewal**

	<b>stayed at 1</b>	<b>2 stars</b>	<b>3 stars</b>	<b>4 stars</b>	<b>5 stars</b>
number of programs	10	8	29	41	10

Among the 148 programs that have been in STARS for at least one year, 18 have opted to remain at a 1 or 2 star level – 12% of the renewing participants. However, no program has stayed at the 1 star level beyond 2 years.

Some programs changed their point profile, earning more or fewer points across the different arenas. Forty three programs were able to use the flexibility of the point system to gain and lose points according to their accomplishments, yet still maintain the overall star level.

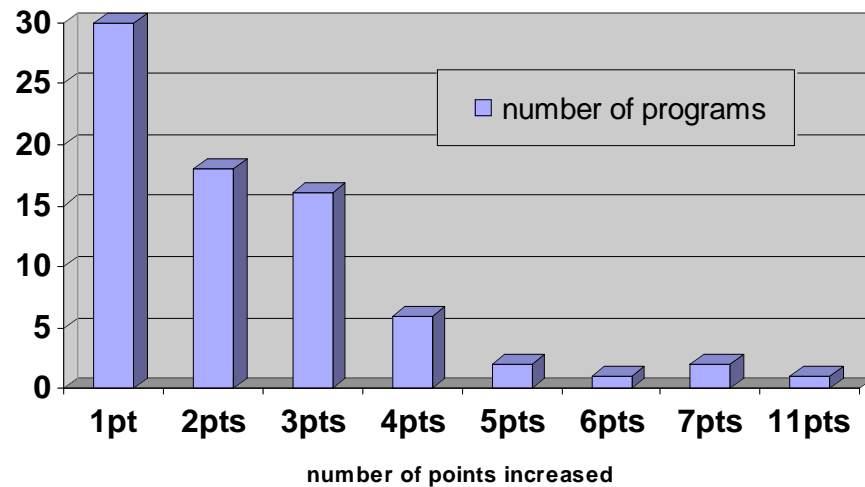
**Table 7. Programs increasing their star level over original application**

<b>started with:</b>	<b>increased to:</b>	<b>2 stars</b>	<b>3 stars</b>	<b>4 stars</b>	<b>5 stars</b>
1 star		6	1	2	
2 stars			4	2	
3 stars				18	
4 stars					15
total		6	5	22	15

Of 147 programs, 76 (52%) programs increased their overall point level. Forty seven programs increased their point levels enough that they achieved a higher star level than the previous year, and 29 programs increased points without increasing star level. Increases ranged from 1 to 11 points with an average increase of 2.3 points. Figure 3 depicts the magnitude of the point increases for these programs.

The large number of programs increasing point levels indicates that STARS is working as a graduated system of recognizing and encouraging program growth and accomplishments. The achievement of more points and stars is within reach of many of the participating programs.

**Figure 3. Increases in the number of points programs earned**



The 76 programs that increased point levels did so by increasing points across the 5 arenas, with 50 programs increasing points in more than one arena.

Table 8 summarizes program increases in points according to STARS arena.

**Table 8. Number of programs increasing points in the five arenas**

	1 point increase	2 point increase	3 point increase	total number of programs
compliance history	30	3	0	33
qualifications and training	19	3	1	23
families and community	33	13	1	47
program assessment	22	4	0	26
administration	27	3	3	33

Particularly noteworthy among the renewing programs:

- ∞ The Families and Community arena has been identified by participating programs as the arena they had the most difficulty with when beginning STARS. However, this arena continues to show the greatest number of programs increasing points – 47 programs increased their point level here (up from 38 in the last report), indicating that they are doing more to engage families and becoming more active as professionals in the community. Programs are becoming more committed to including children needing specialized services, and more committed to leadership roles. Family and professional involvement are indicators of inclusive practices as well as willingness to advocate for

families and the profession. This may be an arena that challenges programs, yet programs are clearly meeting this challenge – this arena has consistently shown higher point levels in renewing programs.

- ∞ The Program Assessment arena showed increasingly active change – 26 programs increased their point level as compared to 17 programs last quarter. This reflects 4 programs that achieved 2 points with a STARS assessor's visit as well as programs that did not do a program assessment in their first year, but did it as part of their renewal. Point increases in this arena indicate that programs are engaging in examining their program practices, comparing their practices to identifiable standards and creating improvement plans. Many programs are doing this for the first time.
- ∞ The Administration arena was another arena where many programs increased points. This arena recognizes business practices for providing appropriate staff support, designing and implementing clear operating policies and practices for families and staff members, and maintaining a financially sound program. The 33 programs that increased points in this arena are increasing their support for the work force.
- ∞ The Qualifications and Training arena shows 23 programs increasing points, indicating that these programs documented higher levels of staff training over the previous year. Staff qualifications and training are consistent indicators of program quality and positive outcomes for children.
- ∞ The Compliance History arena has a large number of programs increasing point levels. Point increases in this arena reflect programs reaching at least 1, 3 or 5 years of operation with no regulatory difficulties and obtaining additional points at these anniversaries. Over half of the programs increasing points were those reaching the 5 year milestone. Programs achieving these anniversaries are able to enhance their STARS achievements.
- ∞ Although two thirds of the continuing programs maintain their initial star level, few of the 1, 2 and 3 star programs stay at their initial star level through the second renewal. Of 18 programs starting in STARS at the 1, 2 or 3 star level, no program has stayed at the 1 star level a third year, and only 5 have stayed at the 2 or 3 star level for 3 years. Two programs, including the one achieving 11 points, have grown from beginning STARS at the 1-star level and achieving 4 stars at their 3<sup>rd</sup> year in STARS. Another program entered STARS at the 2-star level, eventually achieving 4 stars and national accreditation in its 4<sup>th</sup> year in STARS. Fifteen 4-star programs have achieved 5 stars.

## **Summary of findings**

STARS continues to be an agent for improving quality by engaging programs in investing in their program's growth. The number of participants has grown steadily, with no indication that this will slow down (over 2 years of the same application rate).

The participants continue to represent the full range of program type and regional participation. STARS attracts participants in all star levels, demonstrating wide appeal and programs' interest in receiving recognition for all achievements.

Participating programs are invested in renewing their participation. Renewing programs with room to grow consistently increase their achievements over time, even in subsequent years.